

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

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CINCLANT FOR POLAD

COMCARIBSEAFRON

UNCLAS BRIDGETOWN 1649

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS

SUB

J: GRENADA TUC STRIKES TO PROTEST POLICE BRUTALITY

REF: BRIDGETOWN 1636

SUMMARY: PROTESTS AGAINST ALLEGED POLICE BRUTALITY IN GRENADA RESUMED NOVEMBER 28 WHEN TRADE UNION COUNCIL EFFECTED APPARENTLY SUCCESSFUL GENERAL STRIKE. PROTESTERS HAVE ADDED NEW DEMAND FOR ARREST AND PROSECUTION OF POLICE ACCUSED OF BEATING GOVERNMENT OPPONENTS, WHICH GOVERNMENT HAS THUS FAR REFUSED. TWO MEMBERS OF THREE-MAN SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO POLICE OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN APPOINTED, AND COMMITTEE IS TO BEGIN ITS INVESTIGATION DECEMBER 17. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO BARBADOS AND TRINIDAD PRESS, MEMBERS OF GRENADA'S TRADE UNION COUNCIL (TUC) CALLED ISLAND-WIDE UNCLASSIFIED

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GENERAL STRIKE STARTING AT NOON NOVEMBER 28 IN FURTHER

PROTEST OF ALLEGED POLICE BRUTALITY. TUC SAID TO BE DEMANDING NOT ONLY COMPLETE DISBANDMENT OF PREMIER ERIC GAIRY'S "SECRET POLICE" BUT ALSO PROSECUTION OF POLICEMEN ACCUSED OF BEATING GOVERNMENT OPPONENTS OVER PAST TEN DAYS, AND HAS VOWED TO CONTINUE STRIKE UNTIL DEMANDS MET. GAIRY AGREED NOVEMBER 23 TO DEMANDS FROM BUSINESS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS FOR DISSOLUTION OF "POLICE AIDES" AND APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO POLICE OPERATIONS. GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN IS REPORTED TO HAVE ANNOUNCED NOVEMBER 28 THAT DISBANDING OF POLICE AIDES HAD BEEN COMPLETED, BUT HE ADDED THAT GOVERNMENT OPPOSED TAKING DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST POLICEMEN ON GROUNDS THIS WOULD PREJUDICE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION. SPOKESMAN FOR NEW JEWEL MOVEMENT (NJM) REPORTEDLY STATED THAT NJM WILL BRING PRIVATE CASES AGAINST POLICE IF GOVERNMENT DOES NOT. MEANWHILE, BANK EXECUTIVE IN GRENADA TOLD HIS COUNTERPART IN BARBADOS NOVEMBER 28 THAT "POLICE AIDES" STILL OPERATING, HAVING DONNED BADGES BUT NOT UNIFORMS, AND CONTINUING TO SEARCH VEHICLES IN ST. GEORGE'S.

2. REUTER'S RELEASE LISTED ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING STRIKE AS TECHNICAL AND ALLIED WORKERS' UNION, CIVIL SERVICE ASSOCIATION, SEAMAN AND WATER FRONT WORKERS' UNION, HOTEL ASSOCIATION, LAW SOCIETY, MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, AND REPRESENTATIVES OF FOUR MAJOR CHURCHES. "TRINIDAD GUARDIAN" REPORTED THAT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HAS ALSO CALLED ON MEMBERS TO CLOSE UNTIL OBJECTIVES CONTAINED IN NEW RESOLUTION TO BE PRESENTED TO GAIRY ARE MET. ACCORDING TO "GUARDIAN", HERBERT BLAIZE, LEADER OF OPPOSITION GRENADA NATIONAL PARTY (GNP), ISSUED STATEMENT URGING LEGISLATION GIVING COURTS CONSTITUTIONAL POWER TO ACT AGAINST GOVERNMENT AND POLICE, WHICH WAS ONE OF AMENDMENTS GNP TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO ADD TO PROPOSED POST-INDEPENDENCE CONSTITUTION. BARBADOS REDIFFUSION RADIO REPORTED THAT DOMINICA WATERFRONT AND ALLIED WORKERS' UNION, IN RESPONSE TO CALL BY EXECUTIVE OF REGIONAL CARIBBEAN CONGRESS OF LABOR (CCL), WAS REFUSING TO HANDLE CARGO TO OR FROM GRENADA IN SHOW OF SOLIDARITY WITH TUC.

3. MOST BUSINESSES IN GRENADA, INCLUDING GASOLINE STATIONS AND FOOD STORES, ARE SAID TO HAVE CLOSED, AND ELCTRICITY AND TELEPHONE SERVICES ARE REPORTEDLY MANNED BY SKELETON CREWS.

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EMPLOYEES OF LIAT, ONLY AIRLINE PROVIDING REGULARLY SCHEDULED SERVICE TO GRENADA, ALSO SAID TO HAVE JOINED STRIKE, THOUGH LIAT OFFICE IN BARBADOS REPORTS NO DISRUPTION IN SERVICE. REUTERS BUREAU CHIEF IN BARBADOS TOLD EMBASSY THAT TELEX COMMUNICATIONS FROM GRENADA INTERMITTENT, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE OF SKELETON STAFFING AT GRENADA TELEX OFFICE. TELEPHONE SERVICE TO GRENADA ALSO AFFECTED.

4. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT ISSUED BY GOG WEDNESDAY REPORTEDLY STATES THAT GOV. DAME HILDA BYNOE HAS NAMED SIR HERBERT DUFFUS, RECENTLY RETIRED CHIEF JUSTICE OF JAMAICA, AND AUBREY FRASER, DIRECTOR OF LEGAL STUDIES AT UWI/MONA (JAMAICA), TO COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY. THIRD MEMBER TO BE ANNOUNCED SHORTLY. LAST REUTERS REPORT FROM GRENADA STATES THAT DUFFUS HAS ALREADY

BEEN SWORN IN BY GOVERNOR AND EXPECTS TO BEGIN INVESTIGATION DECEMBER 17. REUTERS ALSO REPORTS THAT GAIRY HAS DECLARED TODAY, NOVEMBER 29, A "NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER."

5. COMMENT: ALLEGATIONS OF POLICE BRUTALITY, TO WHICH THERE IS UNDOUBTEDLY A LARGE MEASURE OF TRUTH, HAVE OBVIOUSLY PROVIDED FOCUS FOR UNITING DISPARATE OPPOSITION ELEMENTS. PARTICIPATION OF NORMALLY DOCILE CIVIL SERVICE ASSOCIATION AND SUPPORT OFFERED BY CHURCHES TRADITIONALLY SYMPATHETIC TO GAIRY POINT UP DEPTH OF DISSATISFACTION WITH GAIRY'S AUTHORITARIAN RULE AND GRAVITY OF HIS PRESENT POLITICAL POSITION. GAIRY'S UNCHARACTERISTIC YIELDING TO DEMANDS ON BUSINESS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS LAST WEEK APPEARS TO HAVE WHETTED OPPOSITION'S APPETITE FOR EVEN GREATER CONSESSIONS, PLACING GAIRY VERY MUCH ON THE DEFENSIVE.
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